

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:

August 4, 1997

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LAST WEEK:

AGRICULTURE RESEARCH/EXTENSION MARKUP -

On Wednesday, July 30th, the Senate Agriculture Committee marked-up draft legislation to reauthorize the research and extension activities of the Department of Agriculture. Included in the draft legislation are provisions to allow haying and grazing on CRP land. The draft language would allow haying and grazing on up to 1/3rd of a producers contract acreage per/year. It would also allow the Secretary to determine a payment reduction schedule based upon the value of the harvested cover crop. Federal funding saved through this payment reduction would be applied toward research and extension activities.

SUBCABINET NOMINATIONS CONFIRMED -

The Senate Confirmed the following USDA nominations:

Shirley Robinson Watkins, Undersecretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services
I. Miley Gonzalez, Undersecretary for Research, Education, and Economics
Catherine E. Woteki, Undersecretary for Food Safety
August Schumacher, Jr., Undersecretary for Farm and Foreign Agriculture Services

BALANCED BUDGET, TAX-REDUCTION MEASURES SENT TO THE PRESIDENT -

As Congress concluded legislative business and adjourned for the August recess it passed two pieces of legislation that contain extensive changes to the nation's fiscal policy. H.R. 2015, the "Balanced Budget Act of 1997" will balance the federal budget by the year, 2002. This is achieved mostly through an overhaul of Medicare and by capping discretionary spending. H.R. 2014, the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, offers tax benefits for a broad sector of the public including reform of estate taxes. Additionally, the legislation contains estate tax reduction on land that is subject to a conservation easement, and amends rules dealing with income from the sale of livestock during floods. The President is expected to sign both bills on Tuesday, August 5th.

LEGISLATION OF NOTE-

The following bills of significance to NRCS and conservation were recently introduced:

Bill	Member	Purpose
H.R. 2185	Clayton (NC)	"USDA Accountability and Equity Act of 1997 would implement several of the provisions of the Civil Rights Action Team Report.

S. 1072

Smith (OR)

“Plant Patent Amendments Act of 1997” would protect individuals with patents on plant materials.

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LOOKING AHEAD:

CONGRESSIONAL RECESS -

August recess is scheduled through September 1, 1997. Members are scheduled to return to Washington on September 2nd. Legislative Summaries will suspend until that time.

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